

POLICY BRIEF



Water and Sanitation for Peace, Energy, and Food Security



United Nations
Office of the Special Adviser
on Africa



African Water Facility
Facilité africaine de l'eau
Mobilising Resources for Water in Africa
Mobiliser des ressources pour l'eau en Afrique



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“Water and Sanitation for Life: Harnessing Water Resources for the Africa We Want”

Policy Brief Subtheme 3:

Water and Sanitation for Peace, Energy, and Food Security

Summary

Water and sanitation services are strategic determinants of Africa’s peace, security, energy transition, food systems, and economic transformation. Persistent deficits in safely managed water and sanitation services undermine productivity, exacerbate fragility, constrain energy and food systems, and can potentially amplify conflict risks, particularly under accelerating climate change.

The African Union Assembly’s adoption of the **African Water Vision 2063 AWW2063**) in February 2026 marks a shift beyond viewing water as a sectoral development concern, positioning water and sanitation as **strategic assets**. Investing in these strategic assets is essential for regional integration and for addressing peace and security. Mismanagement and inequitable access to strategic resources are one of the drivers of conflict across the continent. This policy brief situates Subtheme 3, *Water and Sanitation for Peace, Energy, and Food Security*, within that continental vision and proposes priority policy actions to operationalise it.

The brief argues for a **Water–Energy–Food–Ecosystem Nexus** approach, strengthened transboundary governance, and the embedding of water governance as a key component of the African Peace and Security Architecture. Delivering a truly transformative nexus approach requires a Strategic Asset Management (SAM) approach. SAM is an approach that aligns the management of physical assets, such as water assets, with long-term economic goals, ensuring that assets are planned, operated, maintained, and renewed in ways that maximise value, minimise risk, and optimise investment. It is rooted in the corporate world but applied in a development context, and is predicated on strengthening the state’s role in allocating resources to deliver productivity and resilience. Moreover, the SAM approach underscores African states and institutions (including regional bodies under the African Union, such as water assets), with long-term and financial flows to sectors such as water, to allow for the necessary economic and social transformation reflected in the ambition of Agenda 2063.

Without these shifts, Africa risks escalating water-driven fragility; with them, water can become a catalyst for stability, resilience, and shared prosperity.

I. Introduction

Despite decades of international commitment, access to safe water and sanitation remains unevenly distributed and chronically underfunded. Water is strategic for the attainment of both Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030. Access to safe water and improved sanitation, the core commitments of SDG 6, are structurally linked to the energy ambitions of SDG 7, the food security objectives of SDG 2, and the peace and governance imperatives of SDG 16. These interdependencies, in turn, underpin a broader architecture of sustainable development outcomes: poverty reduction under SDG 1, the equity imperatives of SDGs 3 and 5, and the climate resilience objectives of SDG 13. Water and sanitation are therefore foundational enablers of economic transformation, human development, stability, and long-term resilience.

The recognition of safe, hygienic, and dignified access to water and sanitation as a basic need through United Nations Resolution 64/292¹, together with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights² established water and sanitation as fundamental enablers of human security, dignity, and socio-economic inclusion.

In addition to individual rights, water is a primary enabler of development³. A lack of access to adequate water is a key constraint on socio-economic welfare. Investment in small-scale water and sanitation projects can add USD 5% of GDP or \$28.4 billion to African economies. Scaling up these investments further multiplies impacts across African economies.

However, in Africa, the investment gap in water systems is a driving force behind this inadequate water supply, in some cases, more than physical scarcity. The World Economic Forum⁴ estimates that meeting the global objectives of equitable access, climate resilience, and accelerated adoption of circular economy principles and digital technologies will require approximately \$13.2 trillion in water infrastructure investment by 2040. Globally, this is \$7.53 trillion more than is currently budgeted. At a rate of Gross Value Added (GVA) ratio of 1.3, together with creating 31.8 jobs per €1 million (equivalent to \$1.2million) of infrastructure spending, this \$7.53 trillion spending will have \$9.88 trillion as a potential dividend in GVA and create 206 million jobs. Africa's investment need is just over \$1 trillion by 2040. The continent benefits from some of the most significant water reserves. Beyond the infrastructure challenge of investing in access, climate change poses significant challenges to reliably meet the continent's water needs. The starkest expression of this is the extreme weather events to which the continent is increasingly subject. These events

¹ UN-Water. Human Rights to Water and Sanitation. <https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/human-rights-water-and-sanitation>

² United Nations General Assembly, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (New York, United Nations, 1966).

³ UN-Water. Water Drives Job Creation and Economic Growth, Says New UN World Water Development Report. <https://www.unwater.org/news/water-drives-job-creation-and-economic-growth-says-new-un-world-water-development-report>

⁴World Economic Forum, Bridging the €6.5 Trillion Water Infrastructure Gap: A Playbook (Geneva, World Economic Forum, 2025).

have become more frequent and severe because of climate change. Climate change is driving the increasing frequency of flooding and the duration and severity of droughts, underscoring the need to develop resilient infrastructure and technologies to meet Africa's water needs. Africa has seen an acceleration in the number of flooding events in the last ten years, with between 400 and 600 events per year, and the highest number of flood-related fatalities in 2024⁵. Meanwhile, the severity of droughts has accelerated on the continent, affecting over 25 million people across numerous countries in 2024⁶.

The World Bank, in its global water practice working paper titled "*Droughts and Deficits*", characterizes these episodes as "dry shocks." Its findings indicate that such shocks are particularly harmful to economic growth: moderate drought events reduce GDP by an average of 0.39%, while extreme droughts reduce GDP by an estimated 0.85%, with compounding multi-year effects in which prolonged events erode accumulated development gains⁷. Higher-income countries demonstrate greater resilience, owing largely to more diversified water infrastructure that enables access to alternative sources when primary supplies fail. This underscores a critical point: the severity of dry shocks is not solely a function of rainfall deficit, but of the infrastructure capacity available to buffer against it. Investment in storage, transfer, and alternative supply infrastructure is therefore not only a development imperative, but also a climate adaptation imperative.

Africa's sanitation deficit spans both its northern and sub-Saharan regions, though the burden is particularly acute south of the Sahara, where over 570 million people lack access to safe sanitation services⁸ and 200 million still practice open defecation⁹, harming health, nutrition, and productivity.¹⁰ Poor sanitation and insufficient water investment costs sub-Saharan Africa approximately 5% of GDP, around \$170 billion, every year. Yet only \$10-\$19 billion is currently invested annually against a need of \$64 billion per year to meet the 2025 Africa Water Vision, demonstrating that the funding gap far exceeds what aid alone can address.

⁵ Emergency Events Database annual report 2024- [2024_EMDAT_report.pdf](#)

⁶ Ibid

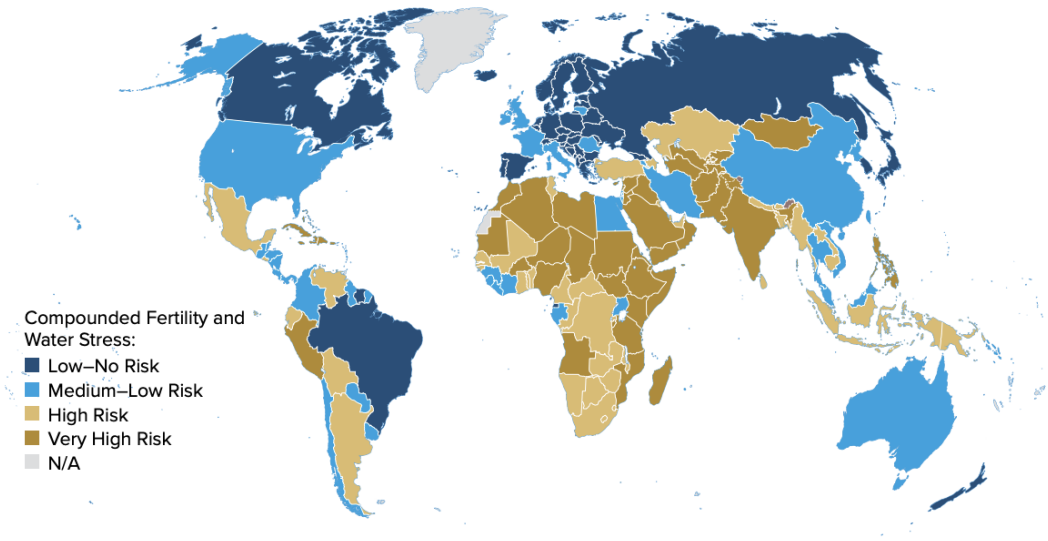
⁷Zaveri E., Damania R., Engle N. (2023), *Droughts and Deficits: Summary Evidence of the Global Impact on Economic Growth*, World Bank Water Global Practice Working Paper, The World Bank.

⁸ WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP). (2023). *Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: 2000–2022 data update*. World Health Organization & UNICEF. <https://washdata.org>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa. (2023). *Africa's Rising Investment Tide: How to Mobilise US\$30 Billion Annually to Achieve Water Security and Sustainable Sanitation in Africa*. African Union Commission. <https://aipwater.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Africas-Rising-Investment-Tide-2024.pdf>

Map 1 Global per Capita Water Availability and Future Population Growth, 2050



Source: World Bank.

Figure 1. An overlay of projected growth against the water availability estimates for 2050. The majority of Africa, with very few exceptions, are in the realm of High to Very High Risk.¹¹

II. The African Water Vision 2063: A Transformational Framework

Adopted at the 39th African Union Assembly in February 2026, the African Water Vision 2063 represents a paradigm shift. The **Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy** emphasize the economic power of water and sanitation, the importance of resilient Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) systems, tie WASH to peace and security, and highlight the importance of leaving no one behind.



Figure 2. The African Water Vision 2063 is both comprehensive and innovative. It bundles its 8 Vision Statements into four clusters. One of its pioneering characteristics is the inclusion of Diplomacy, Peace and Security as a critical cluster.¹²

¹¹ Zaveri E., Damania R., Engle N. (2023), Droughts and Deficits: Summary Evidence of the Global Impact on Economic Growth, World Bank Water Global Practice Working Paper, The World Bank.

¹² African Union Commission, Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want – Popular Version (Addis Ababa, African Union Commission, 2015).

The African Water Vision 2063 comprises eight vision statements, organized into four clusters, as illustrated in Figure 2, and listed in Box 1. It states that:

“The Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy positions water as a catalyst for achieving Agenda 2063’s goals: from poverty eradication, food security and industrialisation to climate resilience and regional integration. The impacts of climate change and climate variability are upon us now. With 90% of surface water crossing borders and 40% of Africa’s population dependent on shared aquifers, cooperation is no longer optional – it is existential”¹³.

Box 1. Listing of the Visions statements of the AWW2063

 ECONOMY AND SOCIETY Water enabling economic growth and inclusive social transformation.		
Vision Statement 1 Universal access to safely managed water, sanitation and hygiene services	Vision Statement 2 Sustainable water availability for transformed economies and growing, prosperous populations facing greater climate uncertainty	Vision Statement 3 A thriving blue economy sustainably leverages Africa’s marine resources to drive prosperity, climate resilience, ecosystem protection and well-being
 DIPLOMACY, PEACE AND SECURITY Water catalysing regional cooperation and integration.		
Vision Statement 4 Water governance systems, institutions and transformative leadership grounded in international water law and the principles of subsidiarity, accountability and transparency	Vision Statement 5 Water basins recognise as shared natural assets for enhancing regional integration, peace, social inclusion and political stability	
 SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE Water for environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient economies and communities.		
Vision Statement 6 People, economies, and ecosystems are resilient and adequately protected from risks of natural and man-made water-related disasters		
 INNOVATION, CAPACITY AND INFORMATION		
Vision Statement 7 Human capital development, technological empowerment and adaptive learning meet the requirements for effective management of Africa’s natural resources base.	Vision Statement 8 Investment into legitimised and integrated water information systems supporting science-based decision making for climate resilience and raising the profile of water management and sanitation in national systems for economic planning, investment and financial allocation.	

This is a powerful statement of vision from the highest level of African governance – the AU Summit. Reactions from Africa’s partners are encouraging. The European Union, through its Blue Africa Action initiative, co-funded with the Government of

¹³ Ibid.

Germany, contributed directly to the development of the Vision and continues to support its implementation in partnership with the African Union Commission and AMCOW. UNICEF similarly supported the preparation of the Vision and Policy, in alignment with its Strategy for Contribution to Africa's Development Agendas.

III. Mapping the AWW2063 against Agenda 2063

AWV2063, together with the related strategies, is designed to advance the progressive realization of Agenda 2063. The illustration in Figure 3 maps the aspirations expressed in Agenda 2063 against the vision statements of AWW2063, underlining the approach required to deliver economic growth, human rights, social protection, and a peaceful and secure continent.

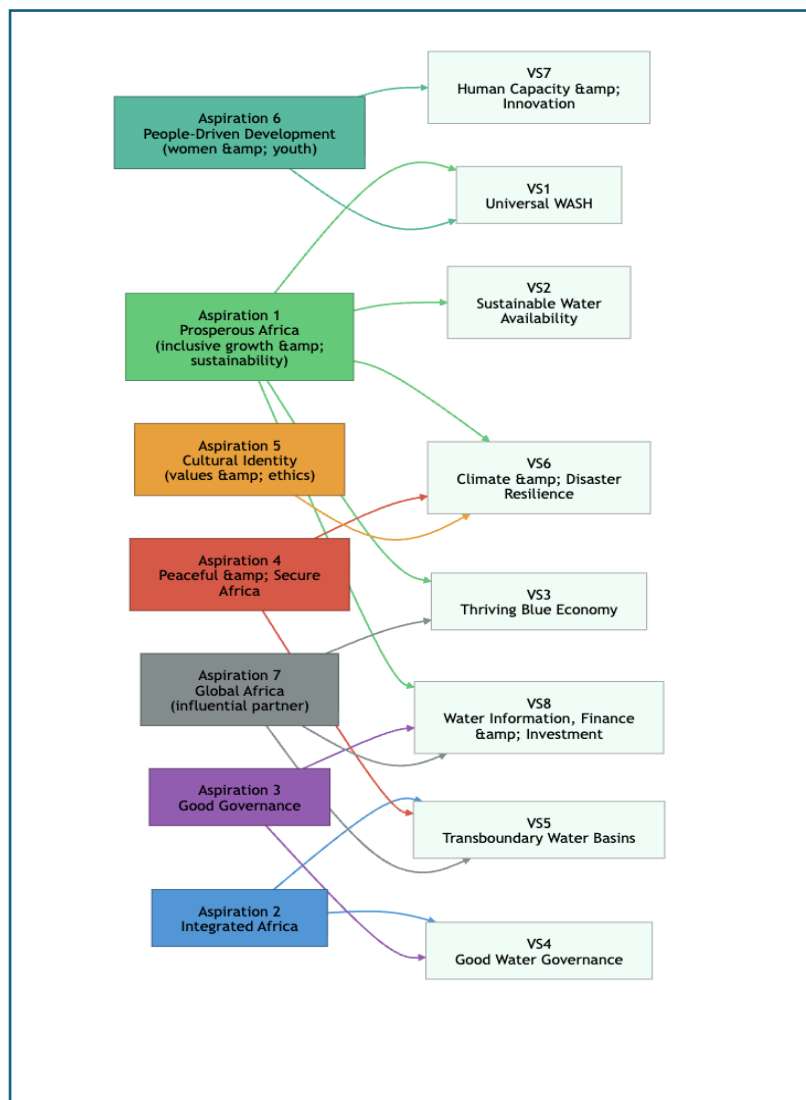


Figure 3. A mapping of the AWW2063 vision statements on the right and the Agenda 2063 Aspirations that they contribute to directly, noting that all contribute to multiple aspirations. Courtesy of DP Naidoo with the assistance of AI¹⁴.

¹⁴ A mapping of the AWW2063 vision statements and the Agenda 2063 Aspirations they contribute to directly, noting that all contribute to multiple aspirations. Courtesy of DP Naidoo with the assistance of AI.

IV. Water, Peace, and Security

Water has long been recognized as both a driver of cooperation and a source of tension. Contemporary United Nations analysis underscores that water security is inseparable from peace and stability: when managed equitably, water can “promote community stability and peacebuilding,” but when scarce or degraded it can undermine livelihoods, intensify food insecurity, and contribute to conflict dynamics.¹⁵

The Pacific Institute’s typology¹⁶—water as a casualty, a trigger, or a weapon of conflict—remains a useful framework for understanding these dynamics. Evidence from Africa illustrates that these categories are not abstract. Recent datasets point to a steady rise in water-related violence globally, with Sub-Saharan Africa among the regions most affected and experiencing a notable increase in incidents linked to disputes over access, attacks on infrastructure, and resource competition (see Figure 4). These patterns align with broader UN findings that growing water stress is heightening the risk of local and regional conflict, particularly in fragile contexts.

Between 2019 and 2023 such conflicts increased by around 154 per cent

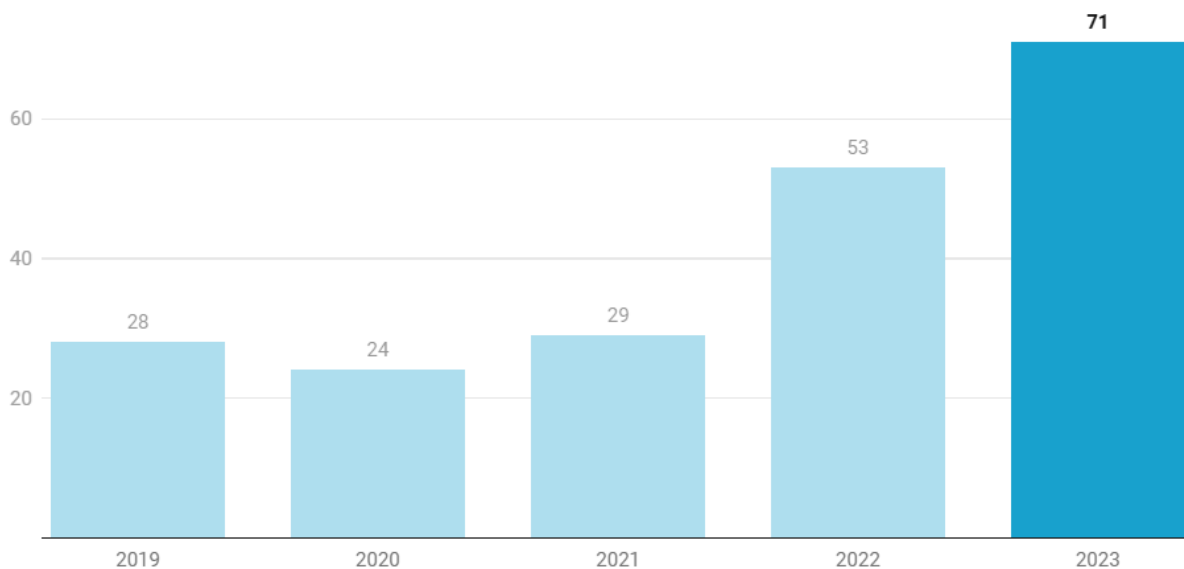


Figure 4. *The number of conflicts around water has increased by 154 per cent between 2019 and 2023- Source- Kiran Pandey, Pacific Institute¹⁷*

At the continental level, the intersection of water insecurity and conflict is most visible in regions such as the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and parts of North and

¹⁵ UN Watter, 2024- <https://www.unwater.org/publications/un-world-water-development-report-2024>

¹⁶ Pacific Institute. Advancing Solutions to the World's Most Pressing Water Challenges.

<https://pacinst.org/>

¹⁷ Pacific Institute. Advancing Solutions to the World's Most Pressing Water Challenges.

<https://pacinst.org/>

Central Africa. These risks manifest across both intra-state and transboundary dimensions. Locally, decreasing water availability and variability—driven by recurrent droughts and changing rainfall patterns—have intensified competition between farmers, pastoralists, and expanding urban populations. The United Nations Environment Programme highlights that climate change is exacerbating such competition over natural resources, contributing to displacement, livelihood loss, and heightened insecurity.¹⁸

At the transboundary level, Africa’s hydrological geography adds further complexity. Over 90 per cent of the continent’s surface water resources are located in 63 shared river and lake basins, making cooperative management essential. Basins such as Lake Chad and the Nile illustrate how water scarcity, demographic pressure, and weak institutional arrangements can intersect with political tensions.¹⁹ In the Lake Chad Basin, for example, approximately 30 million people depend on shared water resources that are increasingly stressed by climate variability, population growth, and conflict, creating what the World Bank describes as a “conflict-climate risk trap.”²⁰

Climate change acts as a critical “threat multiplier” in this context. While rarely the sole cause of conflict, it amplifies existing vulnerabilities by reducing water availability, degrading ecosystems, and intensifying extreme events such as droughts and floods. UN assessments note that these pressures can erode coping capacities, increase migration and displacement, and compound grievances, thereby elevating risks to peace and security.

In Africa, these vulnerabilities are exacerbated by infrastructure and service gaps. These deficits are closely linked to fragile service delivery systems, rapid urbanization, and underinvestment in infrastructure—factors that can fuel social unrest and erode state legitimacy when basic needs are unmet.²¹

The need to build resilience, while also investing in infrastructure, is obviously difficult in fiscally constrained environments. But the reality is that the cost of conflict is even more pronounced. A robust governance framework is required to create conditions for trust, which is essential for peacebuilding and mobilizing

¹⁸ [Climate change and security risks | UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#)

¹⁹ [Forging efforts to promote transboundary water cooperation to address climate change impacts and reduce conflict risks | United Nations Economic Commission for Africa](#)

²⁰ Trevino, Jorge and Davy, Thierry, World Bank, 2023- [Water Security provides way out of water-climate risk trap](#)

²¹ [The United Nations World Water Development Report 2024: water for prosperity and peace - UNESCO Digital Library](#)

investment. Addressing Africa’s water and security nexus requires moving beyond fragmented, outdated approaches towards integrated water resource management, strengthened transboundary cooperation, and climate-resilient investment. Reinforcing the tools which governments can use to deploy Strategic Asset Management is a critical step to deliver a capable state with capable institutions- and one of the most important steps towards securing peace.

Given the magnitude of the challenge on the one hand and the complexity of Africa’s development challenges on the other, sectoral silos are no longer fit for purpose, and a nexus approach is indicated.

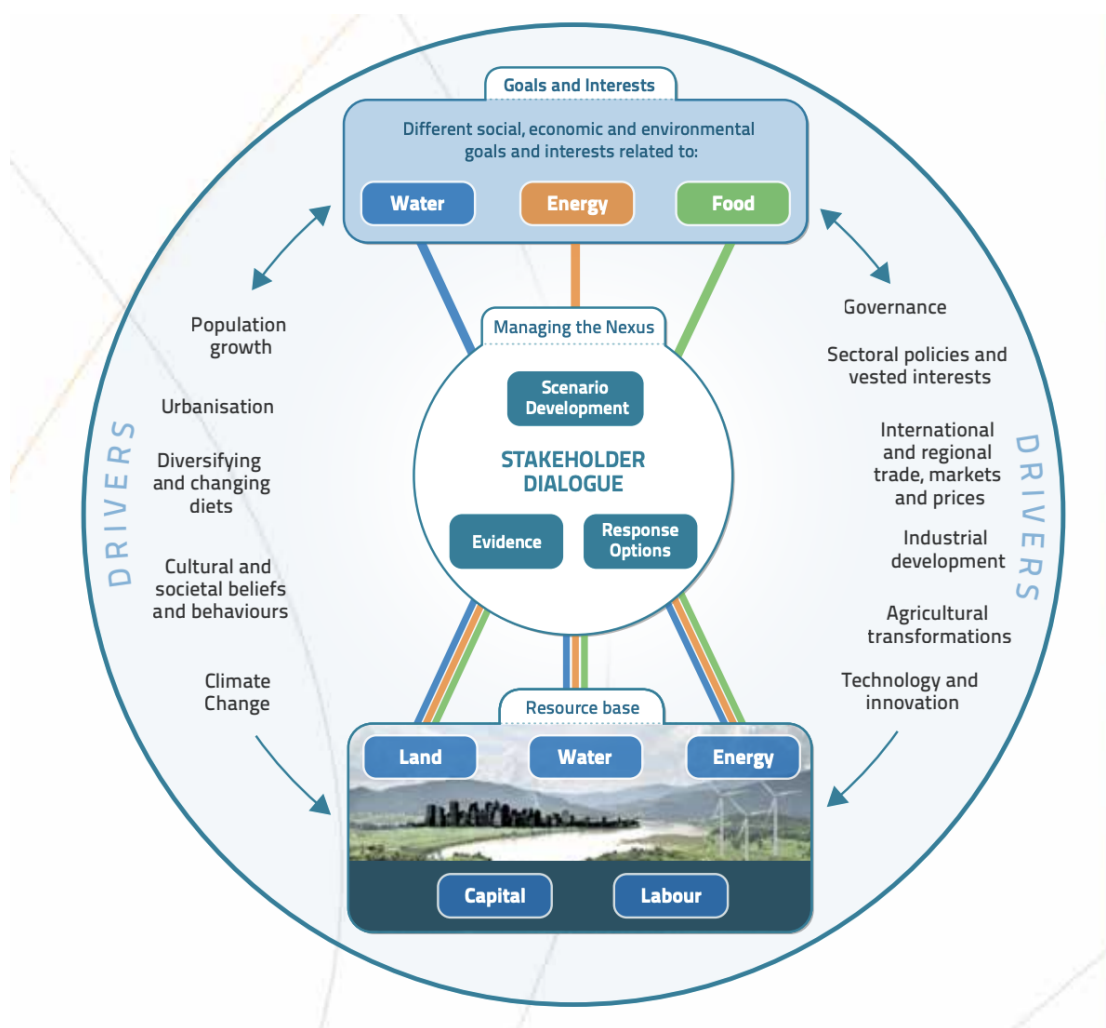


Figure 5. The FAO conceptualisation of the W-E-F nexus in the FAO publication.²²

The Water-Energy-Food nexus sits at the core of this approach. It is a well-studied model with proven practical applications, and its advantage over sectoral silos has

²² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, The Water-Energy-Food Nexus: A New Approach in Support of Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture (Rome, FAO, 2014).

become increasingly relevant for financing. Nexus-based projects address multiple climate vulnerabilities simultaneously, strengthening their case for adaptation funding (see figure 5 above). Their cross-sectoral structure aligns with the requirements of blended finance instruments. By bundling revenue streams across water, energy, and food systems, they offer the risk-return profile that attracts private investment. In a context of severely constrained climate finance, the nexus approach is not only a better way to design projects, but also to implement them. It is a more effective way to fund them.

At its core, the nexus highlights that actions in one sector inevitably affect the others. Agriculture, for example, accounts for around 70 per cent of global freshwater withdrawals, while food production and supply chains consume approximately 30 per cent of total global energy.²³ At the same time, water is required for energy production, and energy is essential for water extraction, treatment and distribution. As demand for all three continues to grow—driven by population growth, urbanisation and economic transformation—the potential for trade-offs, resource competition and environmental degradation also increases.

As already mentioned, in fragile and resource-constrained contexts, including many parts of Africa, these interlinkages have significant implications for peace and security. Competition over water, land and energy resources can exacerbate existing socio-economic inequalities and governance weaknesses, contributing to tensions between users and across borders. The nexus, therefore, provides a framework for addressing shared risks and avoiding policy choices in one sector that may unintentionally deepen vulnerabilities or trigger instability in another.

Climate change is a critical cross-cutting factor within the nexus. It is altering water availability, reducing agricultural productivity, and increasing energy demand, while simultaneously intensifying extreme events such as droughts and floods. These impacts not only affect each sector individually but also amplify the interdependencies between them.

An effective Strategic Asset Management approach integrates a WEF approach, grounded in climate resilience, and can therefore contribute to sustaining peace by promoting coordinated resource governance, reducing competition, and strengthening the resilience of communities and ecosystems. By aligning water, energy and food policies with conflict-sensitive and climate-adapted strategies, countries can mitigate systemic risks, support inclusive development, and reinforce the foundations for long-term stability.

²³ FAO, 2024, [The Water Food Energy Nexus- Conceptual Note](#)

V. Transboundary Water Management

Transboundary water management is a key focus of AWV2063, with particular emphasis on developing functional and robust institutions to manage transboundary allocations, sound dispute-resolution mechanisms, and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) at the basin level. The drivers of transboundary conflict include population growth, the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events on water availability, and ineffective treaties and governance arrangements. Many of these tensions cannot be fully resolved, but they can be managed. Cooperation between riparian states, anchored in IWRM principles and supported by basin-level institutions, offers the most viable pathway for converting shared water systems from potential sources of conflict into platforms for regional integration and mutual benefit²⁴.

According to UN Water, 60% of all water flows globally are transboundary in nature, with 153 countries sharing international waters across 286 transboundary rivers and lakes, and 592 transboundary aquifers²⁵. In Africa, as already indicated, 90 per cent of the continent's surface water are located in 63 shared river and lake basins. Yet the same systems that can drive conflict also hold powerful potential for peacebuilding, as illustrated by the ACCORD²⁶ case study of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), which demonstrates how cooperative basin management can transform shared waters into instruments of regional stability and integration.

VI. Policy Recommendations and a Call to Action

The African Water Vision for Agenda 2063 is a bold and largely successful attempt to collate the various policy initiatives for water and sanitation, along with closely related sectors, into a unified narrative. The continuing conundrum is that water and sanitation touch every sector of the economy and every facet of human social structure. In addition, water and lack of access to water are primary drivers and consequences of peace and security. And water remains a key tool, in the form of hydropolitics, to determine power dynamics in Africa²⁷.

Against this complex backdrop, a SAM approach provides a systematic, evidence-based framework for planning, operating, maintaining, and renewing water and sanitation infrastructure to maximize economic and social value over its lifecycle. Applied across assets—from water storage and distribution systems to treatment plants, irrigation networks, and hydropower—SAM integrates asset inventory and

²⁴ Water, Peace and Security Partnership. WPS Global Early Warning Tool — January 2025 Quarterly Update. January 2025. <https://waterpeacesecurity.org/info/global-tool-update-jan-2025>

²⁵ UN-Water. Transboundary Waters. <https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/transboundary-waters>

²⁶ ACCORD. (2024). Prevention of Water Conflicts in Central Africa and Peacebuilding Through Transboundary Waters. *Conflict Trends*, 2023/4. <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/prevention-of-water-conflicts-in-central-africa-and-peacebuilding-through-transboundary-waters/>

²⁷ Naidoo D. (2025), Water Wars: Has GERD Reset Africa's Hydropolitics?, ISS Today, Institute for Security Studies, 14 October 2025. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/water-wars-has-gerd-reset-africa-s-hydropolitics>

valuation, lifecycle costing, risk assessment (including climate risks), and the use of digital tools such as GIS, remote sensing, and performance analytics. Emerging technologies, including Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence, further enhance real-time monitoring, predictive maintenance, and data-driven decision-making, improving efficiency, reducing losses, and lowering environmental impacts. SAM is essential for achieving water and sanitation goals in Africa by strengthening sustainability, reliability, and resilience. It promotes a better allocation of limited public resources through preventive maintenance, prioritized rehabilitation, and long-term planning, helping to avoid premature asset failure. By ensuring that infrastructure remains financially viable and technically sound, SAM also reinforces public trust and service continuity. Embedding SAM into national and local frameworks supports broader development outcomes, including improved public health, economic growth, and ecosystem protection. It also shifts the sector's focus from infrastructure expansion to sustained service delivery, addressing common challenges such as weak regulatory systems, financing gaps, and limited technical capacity.

Recognizing water as a strategic asset enables stronger integration across sectors—especially to deliver a nexus approach to the Water-Energy-Food (WEF) system—positioning water systems as a foundation for Africa's economic transformation, climate resilience, and long-term stability.

Because water is integral to service delivery and economic productivity, it is one of the highest priorities for conflict prevention.

VI.I Policy recommendations:

(i) Integrating the vision into national and regional frameworks

Converting a 50-year vision into tangible plans is paramount. It would be wise to consider a series of plans leading to 2063. The first AWV2063 plan might run from 2027 to 2033, followed by more conventional decadal plans, 2034-2043, 2044-2053, and 2054-2063. The continental plans should be grounded in national implementation plans, and these will need to be complemented by appropriate regional plans, led by the relevant Regional Economic Community (REC) sub-region and transboundary water authorities. All should have clear performance indicators and Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Impact Assessment (MELIA) frameworks. The UN system, through its presence in member states, is well placed to support this process alongside the African Development Bank and other partners.

(ii) Innovation and the Industrialization of African Water and Sanitation

A wave of practical innovation is reshaping water and sanitation across Africa. Private enterprises across Africa show that faecal sludge can be converted into

biochar, organic fertilizer, and treated water, turning waste into revenue. Digital platforms are improving data collection and accountability for informal providers. Continental trade frameworks and evolving water policies now prioritize universal, safely managed sanitation while recognizing the private sector as a key delivery partner.

Water access and key water infrastructure are both enablers and beneficiaries of Africa's accelerated industrialisation under Agenda 2063, and in particular, the provision of the Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan. Africa imports most water and sanitation hardware, while its service sector remains fragmented and informal. The solution is not more aid but to build an African water and sanitation industry: developing manufacturing hubs in strategic countries across the continent; formalising and certifying small-scale providers; and scaling circular systems that turn waste into fertiliser, energy, water, and carbon credits to fund services.

Acceleration of this industrialisation process also requires engaging the private sector. This involves reaching out to the private sector on implementation of AWVP2063, as well as providing tools for access to finance at national and regional level. With local knowledge, community ties, and commercial incentives, they can deliver sustainable services. Industrialisation provides the enabling conditions for investment, standards, procurement, and data, thereby scaling impact.

(iii) Strengthening Capacity, Education and Knowledge Systems

Achieving the African Water Vision 2063 will require sustained investment in human and institutional capacity development. This includes strengthening water education systems at all levels, from schools to technical and higher education, and providing continuous professional training. Bridging the science-policy-society interface, promoting open science, and integrating Indigenous and local knowledge systems are critical to delivering inclusive, context-responsive solutions. Building a new generation of water leaders equipped with technical, diplomatic, and interdisciplinary skills is essential to advancing water cooperation, resilience, and peace across Africa.

(iv) Integrating water governance and risk analysis into Africa's Peace and Security Architecture

Water insecurity has emerged as one of the most significant threat multipliers to peace, stability, and development in Africa.²⁸ Climate change, demographic pressures, and rising demand across agriculture, energy, and industry are intensifying competition for water at local, national, and transboundary levels, increasingly intersecting with fragility, violent extremism, and forced displacement. Water is therefore a continental security priority requiring deliberate integration into Africa's peace and security systems, as articulated in the African Water Vision 2063.

²⁸ <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/african-peace-and-security-architecture-apsa-final.pdf>

Within Africa's Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) water governance should be developed as a dedicated pillar with three core objectives: preventing water-related conflicts, mitigating water-driven security risks, and leveraging shared water resources as an instrument of peacebuilding and regional integration.

This requires integrating water risk analysis into APSA institutions, including the Peace and Security Council, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), and the Panel of the Wise.

Building on CEWS, AWPSA should integrate hydrological and climate data, socioeconomic vulnerability indicators, and conflict markers to strengthen early warning and response. Advanced tools, including AI-enabled analytics, can translate water risks into actionable insights and link them to clear protocols for diplomacy, mediation, and investment. Strengthened coordination among AMCOW, AU institutions, and regional bodies is essential to position water as a strategic security priority rather than a purely sectoral concern.

(v) Transboundary Waters, Protection, and Peacebuilding

With over 90% of Africa's surface water linked to shared basins, African member states should strengthen basin organisations and transboundary aquifer mechanisms as a peace infrastructure by:

- Supporting equitable use, benefit sharing, and dispute resolution frameworks
- Advancing water diplomacy as a platform for trust-building and regional integration, particularly in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and Central Africa
- Recognizing water and sanitation infrastructure as protected civilian assets under international humanitarian law, with risk assessments for critical systems and rapid response mechanisms post-conflict
- Promoting WASH as a peace dividend, integrating water security into Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR), local development, and state-building programmes

(vi) Capacity and Implementation

Supporting the integration of water governance into Africa's Peace and Security Infrastructure requires:

- Training diplomats, mediators, and security practitioners in water diplomacy and hydro-politics.
- A continental community of practices linking water, security, climate, and conflict resolution expertise.
- Support for African research institutions to generate context-specific policy options.

Development should be phased, beginning with mapping required capacities, with potential prioritization in high-risk basins, supported by predictable financing and robust MELIA frameworks, and by partner institutions for the implementation of the AWVP2063.

VI.II Call to Action:

- (i) Elevate Water and Sanitation as Strategic Assets for Peace and Stability: This requires integrating water governance and water-related risks including scarcity, sanitation breakdown, and climate-induced shocks, into early warning, preventive diplomacy, and conflict prevention systems; and treating water and sanitation infrastructure as protected civilian assets, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings.
- (ii) Translate Vision to Action: Implement the African Water Vision 2063 from ambition to action, through timebound, accountable implementation. This requires investments in Climate-Resilient WASH infrastructure, ensuring funding for drought-resilient, flood-resistant water systems, and investment in infrastructure that contributes to Africa's industrialization by providing access to safe, reliable, and affordable water.
- (iii) Enable Country-Level Translation of the Vision: The UN system and implementation partners of AWVP2063 should actively support Member States in translating the AWV2063 recommendations into national water and sanitation plans with clear, time-bound commitments. This support should include technical assistance, peer learning, and shared monitoring frameworks. Progress should be tracked through existing continental accountability mechanisms to ensure the vision translates into measurable improvements in water and sanitation outcomes for all Africans.

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